

THE CHAPBOOK

(A MISCELLANY)

No. 26
MAY 1922

SEVENTEEN NEW POEMS
BY CONTEMPORARY POETS



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ONE SHILLING NET

THE CHAPBOOK (A Miscellany) first appeared in July, 1919, as a substitute for *Poetry and Drama* (A Quarterly Periodical). It is published about the middle of the month. The following is a list of the numbers that have already appeared :—

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THE CHAPBOOK

(A MISCELLANY)

EDITED BY HAROLD MONRO

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1. They will not be received if brought by hand to the Poetry Bookshop.
2. They must be sent by post, with a stamped addressed envelope (sufficiently large) for their return in case of rejection.
3. They cannot be acknowledged.
4. They cannot be examined within any specified period.
5. Poems accepted for THE CHAPBOOK are paid for one month after publication.

NOTE.—All MSS. receive careful consideration. Sometimes brief criticism is offered, but where they have not been accepted no further correspondence will be carried on regarding them.

ADDRESS : 35 DEVONSHIRE ST., THEOBALDS ROAD, LONDON, W.C.1

Editor's Notes

EVERY month, or every quarter, new periodicals are born, or die. With a tremendous flourish they come to life ; with a languid indefinite flap they expire. There is not sufficient talent ; there is not enough print-worthy new material to fill their pages. Yet each young editor springs ostentatiously and optimistically on to the platform, and, not noticing that the footlights have not been turned on, stands for a time and then retires into the wings under the sceptical or nonchalant stare of an audience that had never asked him to appear.

* * * * *

The expression " Final Man " was invented by Nietzsche. The term is well represented in final man's periodicals. We chatter ; but we desire to print our chatter. *This* periodical persists, because it thinks it can survive all that indefinite hubbub. It may be mistaken : Readers judge !

* * * * *

An essay on *Romanticism* by R. J. Randerson was announced, and was to have appeared in this number. Its appearance has been postponed until later in the year, several readers having expressed a desire that issues containing only verse should be produced as frequently as possible. The Editor is always glad that readers should express their preferences and opinions and the suggestions he may receive always interest him, though he cannot guarantee to answer correspondence.

* * * * *

When the publication of THE CHAPBOOK was resumed in 1922, after a temporary suspension for six months, it was decided that its appearance should be at first quarterly. This present number is the second of two quarterly issues, the first of which appeared on February 15th. The next number will appear on July 15th and from then, onwards monthly, publication will be resumed. The total issue for 1922 will thus consist of eight numbers.

Those who are interested in the periodical and desire to promote its welfare, are particularly requested to send 8s. 8d. to cover a subscription for the current year.



Saints and Jackdaws

An Essay in Eschatology

THE jackdaws wheel about the towers
Where saints and kings sit, row on row,
And chatter in the ears of queens
Who lived a thousand years ago.

The kings and queens take little heed
Who sit and stare into the West :
Three hundred thousand suns have died
Since they were gathered to their rest.

And still they wait, while underneath
The prebends pace, the canons pass,
The black-gowned students, all agog,
Haste by to service or to class.

On crownèd heads and sacred knees
The busy jackdaws fearless build,
And wheel and call, and go and come,
Till every gaping beak is filled.

The clock tolls out, the chimes are rung,
The housewives hurry o'er the green,
The verger with his ebon stave
Sedately walks before the Dean.

Within, the cloistered bodies lie
Of saints and sinners, row by row,
Their bones are dust, their names are lost,
Their dreams are what no man may know.

When will they rise to tell their dreams ?
When will the watch at length be done
Of those who then upon the towers
Shall turn to greet the rising sun,

When void will be the carven seats,
And empty graves beneath them lie,
And torn will hang the empty nests
For which the wheeling jackdaws cry ?

II

(Anthony
Richardson)

Liverpool Street Station

HERE every night at Six-fifteen
The grey crowds swell and surge between
The barriers ; clerks, cashiers, all bland,
Smug-faced on Platform Two they stand
Chatting and smoking, and the roar
Of the lean Express from Platform Four
Shatters the air. Strange whistles, cries,
Blurred colours—reds—greens—ebonies—
Yet still the grey crowds wait serene
And glance down-line for the Six-fifteen !

But I—Ah ! ever a coward—quake
Deep inwardly, for Fear will make
My heart grow icy, this I know,
For the High Gods plotting whispering low
Aloft mid the gaunt grim girders—thus :
“ *Shall we not taunt him ? Joy for us
To see his thin soul shiver, see
His soul's mean compass ! Certainly
Our due is laughter. Light the scene
With bale-fire flares for the Six-fifteen !* ”

Their whispers cease and the echoes float
Hollow and shrill from each arch-way throat,
The grey crowds wilter, the faces gleam
As pale desires of a haunting dream ;
The grey men mutter with bended head
And I know that the strange grey men are dead !
Vast shadows creep where the High Gods sit
And terrible things through the girders flit
With glassy eyes, and their lips obscene
Mouth : “ *She cometh—she cometh the Six-fifteen !* ”

The steel lines lace and dark wings beat
About my face, and with muffled feet
The dead men pass, and the wide black wall
Drops sheer immense as a funeral pall ;
The green flares swim ; in their pools of light
The red glow bloodily ; through the Night
Ghost laughter twitters, ghost sobs are tossed
To whimper above with the wind wisps lost,
And gasp again—“ *There is little to glean
Of the good red crop ere the Six-fifteen !* ”

Smoke-plumed, fire-tongued, with rattling crank
She snorts to the platform ; and rank by rank
The poor dead faces thrill to life,
And the cashier elbows the banker's wife,
And clerk, mechanic, broker and dean
Fight for a seat on the Six-fifteen.
But, hid by the girders, the High Gods smile
And shrug their shoulders and joke awhile :
“ *Reap the red harvest—there's little to glean
Ere the death-plumes toss of the Six-fifteen !* ”

Standards

ALL things that are beautiful,
Fragile, mute and sensual,

Must be broken ere they be
Clad in immortality.

Slanting sunlight on the grass
Vanishes while clouds pass.

Like bright mirrors, lakes at rest
Shatter on a swan's breast.

Quiet water and the sun
Only then are known to one ;

Only then, when lost, they find
Their Actuality in Mind.

So, like sunlight, Love must go
That Love's perfection we may know.

One must die and then the other
Of the two, the loved and lover.

Freed of separate bodies they
Are born as One in their new day.

Symbol then of Love they rise
Starry, lovely, to our eyes.

The Nonconformist

EBENEZER the Nonconformist,
With a wonderful talent for praise,
Goes past the pub to the chapel
Not at all humbly.

He sees himself standing in Heaven,
With severely plain halo,
Blatantly bellowing praises
Into the ear of the Lord.

V

A Conversation

Says Parson to Farmer Jack in the lane :
“ Hullo, then, Farmer, to work again ?
You’re sixty-seven now, if you’re a day,
With a tidy bit put by, I’ll lay.
You’ve done your share, and you’ve worked full measure ;
Why don’t you leave off and take your pleasure ?
Other folk do it. Why shouldn’t you ? ”

“ Ah, Passen,” says Farmer, “ and so I do.
My pleasure be this, for to work and make.
Tid’n’ all for me wive and datter’s sake.
If they gets so much pleasure to take and spend it
As ’tis to me for to make and tend it,
They’m pleased, and I’m pleased, and we’m all content.”

“ Good-day to ’ee, Passen.”
And off he went.

The Six Aeroplanes

OUR poplar-tree looks empty now,
For all her leaves, and seems to wait—
Because one day at dawn there came
Six aeroplanes, all flying straight
Towards her top, as though she were
A famous landmark, far and near.

And there they turned, and poised, and wheeled
Around her summit, in the dawn.
The light was coming up behind,
And through their wings it glanced and shone
Pale gold as they their dance did twist,
Going and coming through the mist—

As though the tree were turned a flower,
And they the hovering butterflies ;
Or as though they all were humming bees
Praising the honeyed flower, their prize ;
Or else young birds just taught to fly,
Revisiting their nest with joy.

Or else as though they all were moths,
And the poplar-tree a candlestick
Holding a flame we could not see
Because the haze below was thick ;
Or as though the tree were dying, and they
Spirits to fetch her soul away.

And in the dawn, in the gold mist,
While they flew round so splendidly,
Not Aphrodite with her doves
Stood prouder than the poplar-tree.
Then one flew off, and all the rest
Followed and flashed away in mist . . .

Adolescence

I HAVE seen black sward flowing under a sky of dust
In a round velvet curve to the warm pool with waves of gold;
I have seen overweening peacocks practising violet lust
In bright angular gardens where no eyes pay coin to behold.

I have seen cream-white amorous children at play there
Till the exultant conquerors swooped with their iron wings;
And there was a scene of the utmost pleasure with shrill pain
there :—

Zig-zag black and white crawled over with riotous red things.

There is deep sky and deep sky colourless as glass is
Where little red stars fly hither and thither as desire compels,
Searching fiercely and blindly for one another over infinite
spaces,
And when after infinite time they meet there is a little chiming
of bells.

“The Italian Air”

IN among the apple trees
and on their echoing golden roofs,
a singing shower rides with the breeze,
and prints the grass with crystal hoofs.

The sighing music faints and fails
among the far-off feathered boughs,
the birds fold up their painted sails ;
but voices sound, until they rouse

The sleeping birds and silent leaves ;
and now a harp once more resounds,
to utter what her heart believes
and what her trembling sense confounds.

His daring loudness wakes the house
that sleeps beneath a staring sun,
the birds awake : the cattle browse :
the page jumps down, begins to run

across the flower-beds ; now there rings
another voice of sterner kind,
the harp still sounds ; Figaro sings
to ease his master's troubled mind.

Her thoughts now hold him in a net,
he fills the meshes and respire,
low boughs of fruit-trees, lush and wet,
drop rain on him, while from the spires

a bell sets shaking every glass,
rattles the windows in the trees,
he strains the meshes, tries to pass,
but now the bells die on the breeze.

This sudden stillness brings again
the silence when his song was done,
the notes that melted all her pain ;
the sunset failing of the sun

robs the shadows of their gold,
and as night darkens he goes back,
the bleating lambs are in the fold,
and all the cattle walk the track

that leads along the grass to home,
he steals among them through the gate ;
they, within these walls, can roam ;
but he is prisoned by hard Fate,

and led by chains within this yard
whose frontiers are the barren walls,
the windows of this house are barred,
there sound no footsteps in its halls ;

when suddenly a light shines out,
Figaro whispers from the sill,
the subtle winds run forth and shout
leaving their shelters on the hill ;

they drop from trees, come forth from caves
and fill the valley with their noise,
they sing like rivers, foam like waves,
and roof this wanderer with the poise

of plumes that shut off light and drown
hot words with soaring of loud wings,
they screen the clamour of the town,
and let him breathe the fire he brings

to fill his heart and touch with flame
her fancy, as she hears the rungs
upon the ladder creak his name
and all the fountains flash their tongues,

They sing like birds and preen their feathers
the nearer Cherubino goes
the brighter burn their plumes in weathers
far too fiery for the rose,

and climbing he will comb his hair
and trim his wings for further flight,
will turn the currents of the air
to make them watch this lovely sight ;

For she will draw him in her net
until he reaches her high stage
still painted with the fruit and wet,
this bird will burst his brittle cage.

He will cross the broken bars
and fly between the golden scales,
his waving plumes will flash like stars,
and cool the Heavens with their sails.

Now he rests upon the ledge
preparing for this last short leap,
before his newest wings can fledge,
She leans and saves him from the deep,

she draws him from those crystal fields
still smelling of sweet juice and foam,
he sinks with his last breath, and yields,
her arm is strong to lift him home.

And now to mask the noisy night
to muffle words and mute the feet,
Figaro strikes the strings, and bright
the harp rings with its sudden beat :

Count Almaviva stirs in sleep
and wakes to look out through the dark,
he marks a bleating of the sheep,
and, like the oars that push a barque,

he hears the strings that carry song
and listens to the serenade,
he little knows the grievous wrong
that lurked behind the cloak it made.

For now the page unclosed his eyes,
and kindled with the fire again,
he saw, in front of him, the prize
to solace all his long lived pain.

Before this gift was in his hands
There came a moment of fierce thrills,
he smoothed down the soft yellow strands,
and preened the music of his quills.

Just then a gentle rain began
to fall among the apple trees
the harp played louder, and there ran
a shiver and a sound of bees

as all the winds came home to rest
and perched among the glittering boughs
they shook each leaf, and turned its vest
more gorgeous than the man who ploughs

will find the summer fields he reaps,
for each leaf shook and showed the moon ;
in cloudless sky and in the deeps
a strength arose, a subtle boon

For light shone in the room and showed
more clear than any waterfall,
the flame that burnt more where it snowed,
until the fire hid with its pall,

a thick cocoon, the life within
that smouldered, now to start afresh
and break out from the senseless skin
with ready wings and living flesh.

These silk-worms spun the sheathing cloth
that lies about our limbs like sleep,
it will not burn with flame, no moth
can spoil the glow its colours keep ;

And they shall sew themselves some wings
with silken feathers for the clouds
to feel the speed their fancy brings
as they will pass those drifting crowds

that wander, mob-like, on the road
before a wind can herd them on,
and where they saw a river flowed,
or, looking for a lake, found one,

above the foam of waves, they float
to sleep in softness, as of air
while, with slow motion, like a boat,
they glide on, and he smoothes her hair.

IX
(Joan Arden)

The Huntsman

We drove along the narrow lane, all dark
With sodden leaves and mud, and paused to see
The misty vale, between the leafless trees.

Then all at once we heard the thud of hoofs,
And close to us some horses galloped by ;
With passionate strength and heaving flanks they passed.

When they had gone, the earth seemed very still :
Only the trampled road and brambles torn,
And on the grassy side some deep hoof-marks.

X

The Passing of Sheep

AS I lay on the shady lawn,
And saw the summer sky,
I heard the pleasant country sounds
And the people passing by.

Then I heard the stirring sound
Of a river running near ;
I raised myself, but only clouds
Of golden dust were there.

The river sound had died away,
Though dust hung in the heat ;
And I knew the sheep had stirred the earth
With softly rustling feet.

Town Garden

HOW wondrously the next-door man has grown
A garden for himself, where bricks were thrown
And bottles and old hoops ! I watched him dig
When winter's rain hung on each poplar twig,
And one wise robin followed him all day
To catch the worms his big spade threw away.

How joyfully I saw the streak of gold,
Pale as the line spring clouds at sundown hold,
That grew and brightened on each barren bed,
As the light grew and the first sunbeams spread,
Till gold and purple in straight ribbons ran,
And, for his planting, crocuses began.

He made an archway for the rambler rose,
And cut the pebble pathway where he goes
All day among his plants, knowing them all.
He hears from his one tree a blackbird's call,
For June is come, and these first wonder flowers
Have charmed a singer from green country bowers.

So day by day I watch the summer grow
Down in the new-made garden. Now I know
How lad's love at sundown scents the slow night,
How little elder shrubs have golden light,
How violas stay long, how poppies die,
And scatter with the first wind's passing by.

And here, I'm told, at the long summer's turn,
In dark red smouldering fire, dahlias will burn,
And tall chrysanthemums, awaiting flower,
Will drink the rain for beauty, shower on shower ;
And when the first leaves fall and creep below,
Great sunflower eyes will watch the summer go.

The Piano-Organ

IN the night
At the hour when the breezes waken,
And set to blowing down the gutters
And off the benches in the park
Scraps of soiled newspaper,
White butterflies aflutter in the dark,
Suddenly my soul is shaken
By a piano-organ at the corner.
Its notes,
Dry, distant, shrill,
Quiver, stiff metallic notes ;
Like the stars that trip the sky
In an old quadrille
Grotesquely curious,
Knowing nothing, caring less for us,
Blind and heedless to what one feels,
But twinkling out of their own unearthly blackness
As out of a high stiff box on wheels.

And the children dance to it :
Tattered, half-fed children dancing.
They have not learned the irony
Of the stars that wink and slyly
Pocket our faith, our hope, and our endeavour.
The tune that rasps my teeth and sets my nerves aquiver
To them is merely gay ;
The piano-organ plays away
Courage, honesty, achievement, sordid or clever,
Bit by bit.
And the children dance to it.

A tired Italian stands turning, turning,
The little crank in the piano-organ's side.
His moustaches are black and wide,
And his teeth are shiny yellow :
He is a dull but honest fellow,
He wears a mechanical grin,
And all the time, stares straight in front of him
As if he could not hear a thing
But the clink of the coin as it strikes the edge of the kerb,
Flung by some unseen hand from the gaslit tenement window.

In the night
The piano-organ suddenly ceases,
Doubtless it has been wheeled away.
And then it starts far off again ;
The worn ironical refrain
Decreases
With which the stars salute this planet's flight.
I would like to follow it day on night,
Hear the self-same chink and roar,
Watching the children dancing to it,
Watching policemen wave it away,
From house to house, from street to street,
Until it reaches earth's last shore,
And at the ends of the world pulls up to play :
And then, I wonder, would it change
Its everlasting tune,
Or would it clatter to the moon
The same dull jig that satisfied the earth ?

After Death—Spring 1915

HAVE the winds a song for you,
Slumberers beneath the grass,
When the grey night-shadows pass,
And the moon is on your crosses,
In the silence and the mosses,
Have the winds a song for you ?

April buds are warm with rain,
From the taint of war and blood :
In these shelves of solitude,
Can you feel the slow Spring creeping ?
In the languor of your sleeping
Do your tired hearts beat again ?

Bootless lose or win to you,
When the woods are still at night,
Does the amorous, old delight
Set your dreaming pulses beating ?
Through the darkness of your sheeting
Do the stars look into you ?

Slumberers beneath the grass,
Have the winds a song for you,
When the grey night-shadows pass
And the moon is on your crosses,
In the silence and the mosses,
Of the hearts that long for you
Have the winds a song for you ?

Gallipoli

A GHOST is on the windy ways,
They say her hair is wet with showers,
They say her hands are filled with flowers,
This ghost that walks the windy ways.

She hath no covering on her head,
She hath no voice to sing, they say,
And yet her eyes are wont to pray,
As though they held their tears unshed.

She doth not pause nor night nor day,
Her feet are bare upon the ground ;
She hearkens for some strange, sad sound,
And marks the crosses on her way.

Her scanty garments cling with blood,
Like fleshless bones her gaunt cheeks cry ;
The loveless nightwinds pass by her,
She walks alone with Solitude,

Where hungry stars call to the sea
And carrion gnaw her hungry breast :
The voiceless spirit of unrest,
The shadow of Gallipoli.

XV
(I. M. Swaine)

Dark over the Town

THE city sleeps beneath the gilded night,
And every burgher in his peaceful bed
Doth rest, till day shall rouse him up once more.
The homely housewife and her tired spouse
Between the mended sheets in slumber lie,
But some there are who lie awake and weep.
Look down, calm stars, and comfort their distress !

XVI

Epitaph to Myself

HERE lives Ida, stiff and staid,
Soon to be a stern old maid,
Stupid, stale, and much decayed,
Past the power of human aid,
In the tomb herself hath made,
Where lie all the flowers that fade,
All the hopes of youth, delayed,
All the tunes she sang or played,
All the pictures old and bad,
That once made her young heart glad.
Here she lies, but do not weep
For she only lies asleep.

Stepping-Stones; or, The Self-made Poet

HOW queer it is to think about my past,
Now that my Fame is won, and planned to last.
Oh ! my first Introduction—with what care
I tied my tie and brushed my youthful hair,
Washed my slim hands and polished up my Greek,
Before I called upon Sir Edmund Beeke.

Those early Introductions : every Call
Was a large Stepping Stone ; now worn so small !
How shy I was ; how diffident : to think
I could not flatter ; could not even wink !
I was so simple that I could not see
Even when other people winked at me.
Nevertheless each stone I stepped upon
Served my advancing foot, and then was gone.

My second Introduction and my third
Took me to Mr. Swamp and Mrs. Worde ;
He full of taste, she one who daily brings
Some Miracle to pass, by pulling strings.
My fourth (Oh glassy !) even still I see
That fourth proud fellow : how he stared at me,
Sitting and sighing in that learned place
That rims the eyes of many a youthful face.

That all is left behind now : every stone
Is pushed away. I, prosperous and well-known,
Patting my worthy Fame upon her back,
Enquire : “ What, dearest lady, do you lack ? ”
And she replies : “ Oh, fondest love of mine,
Ask me to luncheon ! Take me out to dine !
Let us enjoy our life, and, while we may,
Make after-dinner speeches every day !

Let us remember how the stones pass by,
And step beyond ourselves before we die.
Let us attack our rivals without fear ;
Publish more splendid volumes every year :
Not rest contented if we cannot be
A Classic by the age of thirty-three."
Then to my Fame I answer : " You are wise,
And life is short, and everybody dies.
I like your notion and I will not fear
To publish a new volume every year.
Let us sit down and write our next, my dear."



THE POETRY BOOKSHOP

Has recently published:—

- (1) POEMS FROM THE WORKS OF CHARLES COTTON, SELECTED AND DECORATED BY CLAUD LOVAT FRASER. (5/- net.)
- (2) REAL PROPERTY, BY HAROLD MONRO. (Paper, 2/6 net; boards, 3s. 6d. net; Numbered and Signed Edition of 100 copies, 10/- net.)

Will publish during the course of 1922:—

- (1) A VOLUME BY MARY MORISON WEBSTER, whose poems have frequently appeared in THE CHAPBOOK.
- (2) A VOLUME BY H. H. ABBOTT, eight of whose Poems appeared in No. 7 of THE CHAPBOOK.
- (3) AN ANTHOLOGY OF SOME 200 OF THE SHORT POEMS OF THIS CENTURY, SELECTED, WITH AN INTRODUCTION, BY W. H. DAVIES.
- (4) A SELECTION FROM THE LYRICAL POEMS OF MICHAEL FIELD.
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